

this issue, and I am pleased we are about to do so.

The Postal Service has long been an essential piece of American communication and commerce, but its financial condition has recently, at least, threatened its future. Kansas's rural communities, in particular, where broadband access to brick-and-mortar businesses is limited, rely heavily upon the essential services of the Postal Service as a means of staying connected and competitive.

The familiar sight of a U.S. Postal Service truck—the jeep, the truck that goes down our country roads making its deliveries—is part of the daily life for Kansas's farmers, ranchers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

For rural America, the Postal Service—their mailman or their mailwoman—is often the glue that keeps those communities connected to the rest of the country. In many instances, we rely upon our postal carriers to make certain that somebody is alive and well, that they are OK in their homes, and report odd behavior or a crime that might occur. Our postal carriers are a significant component of the fabric of our communities.

Unique in its ability to reach nearly every address in America, the Postal Service is an indispensable piece of infrastructure, in fact, created by the Constitution of the United States giving us the instructions to provide postal roads.

During the height of the pandemic, the Postal Service employees maintained their delivery routes, bringing essential medicines, groceries, and vital supplies to families' doorsteps.

We pay a lot of attention to veterans' issues, and I would highlight how important the Postal Service is for those who served our Nation. In most instances, it is how they receive their prescription drugs. It is beyond just handwritten cards and notes, although those are clearly important and, again, an important component of our life. We all enjoy receiving those. But the Nation is reminded firsthand about the irreplaceable role of the Postal Service.

As I said, in my earliest days since representing Kansas in Congress, I have advocated for the preservation of rural post offices and commonsense reforms to ensure the Postal Service's stability.

With every conversation I have had with the Postmaster General, I have reminded them perhaps they should spend less money on consultants and listen to their employees who might be the best people to tell them what they might do to improve their efficiency and save costs.

When a post office closes—and we have had a few of those happen too frequently in Kansas—it creates problems for businesses and families; it may cause significant harm to the local economy; and it certainly makes a difference in the lives of seniors in those communities.

For the past several sessions of Congress, the Senator from Delaware, Sen-

ator CARPER, and I have introduced postal reform legislation and worked together with the goal of putting the Postal Service on firmer financial footing, improving service, and allowing for the development of new revenue streams and enhancing transparency through performance metrics.

I have indicated to the Postmaster General in my conversations that the solution to the post office's financial conditions cannot be simply reducing services. The more services are reduced, the less likely Americans will or can use the Postal Service.

So closing post offices, shortening the number of days in which mail is delivered, reducing the hours of the post office, slowing the delivery of the mail, closing mail-sorting centers can't be the solution to making certain that the post office has a bright future and that Americans are served.

The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022, which I hope is on the floor soon for our consideration, was passed by the House last week, and we look forward to its arrival here. It builds upon our previous attempts to accomplish postal reform.

Included in these reforms is the creation of a new Postal Service Health Benefits Program and focusing on reestablishing—stabilizing the USPS's finances, instead of funding benefits in advance.

The bill will allow the Postal Service to enter into agreements with State, local, and Tribal governments as a new method of revenue for the Agency.

I am also pleased that the bill will codify 6-day delivery, which is a provision I have long supported in my role as an appropriator and one that greatly benefits rural Kansas homes, where mail delivery is more difficult.

The Postal Service Reform Act represents a great step forward to ensure that Kansans and Americans can continue to rely upon the U.S. Postal Service. I am a sponsor of this bill, and I intend to support it when it arrives in the Senate for a vote and urge my colleagues to join me in doing so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Alaska.

UKRAINE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I have asked to be recognized this afternoon to speak to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.

As we all know, the current situation is that it is pretty tough right now. Russia has amassed more than 100,000 troops on or close to Ukraine's border and may be planning to launch a full-scale invasion within a matter of days. And this follows, of course, their illegal seizure of the Crimean Peninsula back in 2019 and a hybrid war in the Donbas that has been going on now for over 8 years.

As a Senator from Alaska—the State that is clearly most proximate to Russia—we are all too familiar with Russia's aggressive tactics. They routinely fly near our airspace. They sail

through our waters. They test our defenses and reactions.

In August 2020, a flotilla of Russian warships and military aircraft encroached into our EEZ, our exclusive economic zone, there in the Bering Sea. They repeatedly harassed our fishermen, forcing them to leave their waters from which their very livelihood flows. The fishermen were shocked, I mean, just stunned with what they saw, and they literally left millions of dollars of fisheries' assets out on the line.

Provocative actions, and we felt that provocation. They are disturbing. They are alarming. But there are also some perhaps smaller, maybe symbolic actions that can also be a little unsettling. It was several years ago now that we were at an Arctic conference, and the Russian delegation gave me a diplomatic gift at a conference that featured maps showing Alaska back as part of their territory. Maybe they thought it was funny; I did not take it as such.

What is happening on the Ukrainian border is something else entirely. It is impossible not to be rattled by what we are seeing, worried by where it could lead.

But I think we recognize in this body what we need to do, what we need to focus on. We need to turn these concerns into resolve, and that resolve needs to lead to action. I know that there are many in this Chamber working very, very hard—and I thank them for that—working toward a sanctions package.

The bipartisan goal is to deter both—to deter Russia from invading Ukraine but also to impose severe sanctions if that happens. And I know that the joint effort has perhaps stalled out right now, but, hopefully, the two sides and the White House will come together to finalize it.

I believe it is an imperative that we have a united front on this matter. A united Congress on the matter of sanctions, I think, is a powerful message in and of itself.

If we can bring a sanctions package to the floor, I am going to be asking colleagues to consider two additions to that: one, to restrict imports of Russian seafood and a second related to Russian energy.

So with respect to seafood, Russia has had an import ban on American seafood since 2014—since 2014. Most Americans don't know that Russia responded to U.S. sanctions imposed after their annexation of Crimea by banning U.S. seafood imports, among other goods, at that time. So that has been in place all these many years.

And it is absolutely unfair that Russia has unlimited access to sell its seafood in the United States, while America's fishermen and our seafood processors, particularly those in my State of Alaska, have no access to markets in Russia. So this embargo either needs to end or we need to incorporate reciprocal measures.

And when it comes to energy, we simply do not need U.S. dollars to be financing Russia's territorial aggressions, especially—especially—when we have everything that we need here at home.

There is a lot to understand about the crisis in Ukraine: how Russia is undermining the international order and disrupting well-established global norms, how the potential for an invasion threatens not just Ukraine but European and global security, how an invasion could lead to catastrophic escalation and enormous loss of life, and how this situation impacts the United States, whether we want to involve ourselves or not, and how a diplomatic solution still exists if Russia chooses such a path.

What I want to focus on today are two aspects of this crisis that have received less attention so far. And the first is how an invasion could destabilize the Arctic as part of a far-reaching wave of secondary impacts. And the second is the role that poor energy policy has played in actually strengthening Russia's hand.

Now, I have come to this floor many, many times to talk about the importance of the Arctic. The United States is an Arctic nation because of Alaska. We rely on the region for everything from energy, minerals, seafood, shipping, national defense. And we have always worked—we have always endeavored to keep the High North as a region of peace, an area where geopolitical challenges are often compartmentalized in favor of collaboration and partnership. You need to work hard in remote, isolated, cold, dark places. You need to work together.

So my concern today, as we are talking about Russia and Ukraine, is for the ripple effects that an invasion could have in the Arctic. I am worried that it will derail much of what we have been able to accomplish in the region and make it hard or impossible for the United States to trust and work with Russia in the region.

I am also worried about what Russia's brinksmanship means for our friends in the Arctic. Certainly, if I were Finland or Sweden, I would be looking over my shoulder right now. This is the type of crisis that could convince them to join NATO.

At the same time, however, I certainly respect those nations' rights and discretion to choose their alliances carefully, and discussions about them should include them. I also fear for the health of the Arctic Council, the leading governmental forum promoting cooperation in the Arctic. Last year, I had an opportunity to join Secretary Blinken in representing the United States at the Council's biannual ministerial. It was at that time that Iceland transferred the gavel to Russia, which is chairing the Council through May of 2023.

I think it was important that Secretary Blinken attend this event in person to reaffirm the role of the

United States in this important governing body, but attending the meeting did more than that. Convening in the Arctic provided an opportunity for Secretary Blinken to meet for the first time with his Russian counterpart. While there, the two diplomats agreed that while our countries have differences, the world would be safer if we worked together where our interests intersect. One of those areas is the Arctic, and we need to be able to continue to work together in that region.

It is interesting to note that with all the ongoing diplomatic discussions between the United States and Russia playing out in places like Geneva and Paris, the first time this administration discussed the topic of troop movements on the Ukrainian border with Russia in person was on the sidelines of the Arctic Council ministerial in May.

There are very few places in the world that a meeting like this would be politically palatable for either country. Yet, for decades, the Arctic has provided a place for the United States and Russia to convene even when we have our differences. All you need to do is look back to 1986, the Reykjavik Summit between President Reagan and Premier Gorbachev. Inside a small, little house in a small Arctic country, the leaders of the two biggest powers convened and nearly agreed to ban all ballistic missiles. That meeting in Iceland paved the way for nuclear forces treaties and the eventual end of the Cold War.

But the situation we face today begs the question, what will become of our relationship with Russia in the Arctic if they move forward with war against Ukraine?

Last week, I participated in a virtual meeting of the Arctic Parliamentarians. This is a group composed of members of Parliaments and Congresses of the eight Arctic nations. I have been representing the United States on the Standing Committee for years and years, decades now. These are all of the Arctic countries, including Russia, of course. But the purpose of this body is to promote regional cooperation, and, as was the norm at our meetings, we focused on things that are impacting the people in our region. This past week's meeting was no different. We focused on COVID impacts, mental health, environmental issues, and Arctic infrastructure. While the growing security issue was not raised, it was kind of an unspoken shadow.

I throw this out there because I know that while I think about the Arctic every day, I can guarantee you that the Arctic is not top of mind for most on Capitol Hill. It took us nearly a decade to secure funding for a new icebreaker, which won't be put to sea for another 5 years, all while Russia launches a new one every year.

I want the Foreign Relations and the Armed Services Committees to pay more attention to the Arctic and to look to the region as both a strategic asset and a diplomatic tool. We often

talk about how valuable this region is, but it can only be useful if we use it. I am afraid that sometimes we just overlook or we neglect its importance, and I think it is time that we change that.

Now, another aspect of the situation that I mentioned at the onset of my comments here is the issue of energy. It certainly deserves discussion when we look to Europe's energy policies, which have only served to weaken their ability to respond to Russia's aggression. This is a crisis for many countries in Europe, but I think it is also a timely warning for us here in the United States.

Europe imports about 40 percent of its natural gas and 27 percent of its oil from Russia. The Nord Stream 2 Pipeline would only add to that total, while sidelining Ukraine as a key transit point, and therein lies the problem. Europe is already heavily dependent on Russia for energy, but they are doubling down. Their needs are particularly acute in the depths of winter, and that has perhaps undermined some European nations' willingness to respond to Russian aggression.

I would suggest that the Biden administration is putting us on a similar path when it comes to our oil and gas. If they continue to shut down domestic resource production, we cannot magically shift to renewables and do this overnight. What will happen is, we will become more dependent on others for our supply. We have already seen some signs of this happening—perhaps not directly the fault of the Biden administration but, instead, the thinking that it has embraced.

Look at California. California's foreign oil imports—their foreign oil imports—have risen significantly over the past 30 years as production in their State and especially Alaska has declined. For the last 3 years, the United States has actually imported more oil from Russia than we were allowed to produce in Alaska.

So why—why—would we choose to forgo the jobs and revenues from domestic energy production to instead send our dollars to Russia and others? It is beyond me, and so are the actions the Biden administration has taken over its first year or so in office, which have been explicitly designed to limit production from States like Alaska even further.

They shut down Federal oil and gas leasing for months, with an eye toward making that permanent until the courts intervened. They have refused to implement the law when it comes to the 1002 area of ANWR. They are taking millions of acres out of leasing in our NPR-A. They have stalled projects and rejected pipelines, which, of course, are the safest and cleanest ways to move energy to where it is needed. As energy prices have risen, the Biden administration has gone to OPEC to ask them to just produce more.

Just as our allies and partners around the world realize they need and

they want our energy, the administration has halted Federal investment that helps facilitate overseas LNG terminals.

I have suggested that the President and his team really ought to be thankful that the provisions in Build Back Better that target the domestic oil and gas industry did not go through because they would have only made the situation worse.

If there were ever a moment for energy realism, it is right now. The Biden administration and many here in Congress need to recognize the immense benefits of American resource production here at home and for the rest of the world, and they need to see clearly the immense consequences of refusing to allow those activities to proceed.

I will just add one further point here. If Russia can leverage Europe on Ukraine over natural gas, China can do the same to the United States on Taiwan over minerals. We are deeply, deeply dependent on China, and they are well aware they can inflict massive economic consequences by cutting off our access to a range of raw materials and components.

We have to address this weakness through every option we have available to us. We certainly have opportunities in my State of Alaska for mines and mine access projects to help address this very real situation with our minerals.

None of us know exactly what will happen in Ukraine. We pray for deescalation. We take some solace from the continuation of diplomatic talks. But almost no one believes Russia is just going to walk away. All I can think is that we have to find ways to make it not worth it for Russia. Every little bit we can do to make this painful for Russia to prevent the loss of life, to punish this behavior, to call out its unwillingness to be a responsible global actor—we all we can do at this point is necessary.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SINEMA). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COUNSEL DURHAM COURT FILING

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I come to the floor to give you an example of some of the hypocrisy that goes on in this town.

On February 11, last week, Special Counsel Durham made another filing with respect to the case against Clinton campaign lawyer Michael Sussmann.

I have spoken to my colleagues before to discuss Special Counsel Durham's findings in this matter. Today, I want to highlight new evidence that has come with this filing.

Special Counsel Durham's filing said that at trial, his team will establish

that a firm tied to the Clinton campaign misused internet traffic pertaining to four entities: a healthcare provider, Trump Tower, a Donald Trump apartment building in New York, and the Executive Office of the President of the United States.

The Clinton campaign essentially spied on the Trump campaign. After Trump was elected, the Clinton campaign's work continued.

Now, how did they do it?

According to Special Counsel Durham, the Clinton campaign worked with cyber researchers to infiltrate private and government servers connected to Donald Trump. Their main conduit was Tech Executive-1.

In July 2016, according to Special Counsel Durham, "Tech Executive-1 also enlisted the assistance of researchers at a U.S.-based university who were receiving and analyzing large amounts of Internet data in connection with a pending federal government cybersecurity research contract."

In addition, Tech Executive-1 had access to dedicated servers for the Executive Office of the President as part of a "sensitive arrangement." This individual "exploited this arrangement . . . for the purpose of gathering derogatory information about Donald Trump."

According to Special Counsel Durham, the Clinton campaign through Tech Executive-1 abused "non-public and/or proprietary Internet data."

One question that needs to be answered is whether any of this exploited information and data included classified information.

The available facts show that the Clinton campaign abused Federal Government contracts to exploit government information to use against Trump. If the Republicans did the same thing, we all know you wouldn't hear the end of it. The Democrats and media would want another impeachment of Trump.

All of these outrageous acts were done to create fake connections between Trump and Russia. That included the fake Alfa Bank narrative. That narrative centered on allegations that Trump had a secret communications channel with the Russian bank. It was all fabricated by the Clinton campaign. There was nothing to it.

And let's not forget that Jake Sullivan spread the fake Alfa Bank narrative, and he spread it far and wide. Sullivan is now President Biden's National Security Advisor. He needs to answer for his role in this entire fiasco.

Even the Obama administration's servers communicated with the same Russian servers that were apparently the basis of the false Russia connections. Now, just think how ridiculous this rollout was. With this so-called evidence against Trump in hand, on February 9, 2017, Sussmann provided updated allegations to an unnamed U.S. Government Agency. Of course, he left out the Obama administration connections.

Some of those allegations included that Trump and his associates used rare, Russian-made wireless phones near the White House. Durham said that there was no evidence of that.

But some evidence is very, very clear. During the election, the Clinton campaign spied on the Trump campaign. After Clinton lost, the Clinton campaign spied on the Trump administration. And they did it by abusing Federal Government contracts; and they did it by abusing their access to government information.

Trump has repeatedly said that the Clinton campaign spied on his campaign. The mainstream media either ignored him or called him a liar.

Based upon Special Counsel Durham's filings, Trump, it turns out, was right.

The Clinton campaign, mainstream media, and the Democratic Party did whatever they could do to destroy Trump, no matter the cost to the truth or the cost to the country.

The House Democrats, with the backing of corporate media, set up the January 6 Commission to investigate what they termed the Big Lie.

Where are those on the January 6 Commission when it comes to investigating the Big Lie where the Clinton Campaign worked with the sitting Obama administration and taxpayers' money in trying to destroy their political opponent?

That is just as dangerous to our democracy.

As I conclude my remarks, let's come to grips with this absolute fact: The Clinton campaign's conspiracy of dirty tricks set in motion a chain of events that have ripped this country apart for years.

So much for a peaceful transition to power.

Now, what is disturbing to me about the hypocrisy in this town is that we have the First Amendment, freedom of press, where I see journalists as keeping government honest, and I don't see the people that knew that they were wrong about this issue for 4 or 5 years willing to admit that now they haven't done their job properly.

And a lot of things that made government dishonest—and I just told you how this was done—don't seem to be worried about policing the political system the way they should.

I haven't seen anybody apologize.

I did see a rerun of something that happened October 2020 within the last couple of days, an interview between one of these journalists and President Trump where President Trump was trying to tell people that this stuff was going on, and they said, No, there is no proof of it. There is no proof of it.

Are they saying today there is no proof of that?

I think we all know that Trump wasn't in government. Maybe he even lacked some understanding of how the political system works, but he came to town to challenge the elite that are inside the beltway and change things.